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DEPT FOR IO/RHS, DRL/MLGA, EUR/PGI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNHRC](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/HRC: BELARUS CANDIDACY

REF: STATE 58036

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer; reasons 1.4 (b and d ).

¶1. (U) Poloff delivered reftel demarche May 4 to Peter van der Vliet, Head of the Political and Legal Affairs Division, UN and IFIs Department, Dutch MFA.

¶2. (C) Van der Vliet stated that the Netherlands is fully occupied with its own campaign for re-election to the HRC and is wary of campaigning either openly or quietly against any other country. The Netherlands, he said, is in a tight race with Italy and Denmark and cannot afford to alienate potential voters. Van der Vliet justified the Dutch position by saying that the Netherlands believed it was preferable to ensure that strong human rights supporters ensured their own seats first. (Comment: a rather odd assertion, given that none of the countries running from the WEOG could be considered anything but observant of human rights. End comment.)

¶3. (C) While the Netherlands would not, he said, vote for Belarus and fully opposed the Belarussian candidacy, it preferred to go no further than the joint EU statement on the matter. Van der Vliet repeated the Dutch position that the Netherlands will not vote for any serious human rights abuser, whether Belarus, Iran, North Korea, or another. Nor will it make deals with any of these countries. He said that the Netherlands believed Italy had made a deal with Belarus, and he invited poloff to pass this observation to Washington.

¶4. (C) On a possible third country candidate for the eastern group, van der Vliet expressed concern that such candidate might wait too long to enter the race. He suggested Bosnia was willing - obviously not a secret in The Hague - and said he did not believe Slovenia would pull out of the race should the Bosnians enter. He ruled out Dutch campaigning for either Slovenia or Bosnia.

¶5. (C) Comment: The Dutch MFA is narrowly focused on re-election to the HRC. Reversing this counterproductive stance will require concerted pressure from other EU members and probably some EU horse trading. End comment.

ARNALL